

PRESS RELEASE

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Plans in place to relieve pressure on county's acute and A&E services

Worcestershire's health and care chiefs are working together to alleviate pressure on the county's acute and emergency services.

In light of national reports questioning the long-term sustainability of accident and emergency services due to demand and pressure in that part of the system, all the local health and care organisations want to reassure patients and residents that plans are in place to reduce pressure on these services in Worcestershire.

The **Well Connected** programme for example is a coming together of chief executives and leads from all the local NHS organisations (Acute Trust, Health and Care Trust and Clinical Commissioning Groups), Worcestershire County Council and key representatives from the voluntary sector. Together we aim to better join up and co-ordinate health and care for people and support them to stay healthy, recover quickly following an illness and ensure that care and treatment is received in the most appropriate place. It is hoped this will lead to a reduction in avoidable hospital admissions and the length of time people who are admitted to hospital need to stay there. Part of this approach is to develop alternative services in the community allowing people to remain at home, or close to home, perhaps with the aid of new technology and receive an equivalent or better experience to what they would have had in a hospital. This will reduce demand on acute and A&E services, leaving them with the capacity to care for and treat those people who need the specialist level of support they are equipped to provide.

This approach supports the Urgent Care programme, which is also led by senior staff from across the local health and care system, and has been set up in response to levels of demand within the county's three acute hospitals; the Worcestershire Royal, Alexandra and Kidderminster Hospitals. It aims to develop urgent care services that ensure patients and the public have access to convenient, high quality, timely and cost effective urgent and emergency care services. The aim is for patients to be seen by the right health and/or social care professional, in the right setting and at the right time. The GPs working with paramedics in an ambulance, for example, aims to cut avoidable conveyance and admissions to hospital and instead provide appropriate care for patients in their own home.

Bernie Gregory, Medical Lead for the Well Connected Programme, said: "Our organisations recognise that we need to work together to alleviate pressure in parts of the system that face the biggest demand while continuing to put patients first and ensuring people get the care they need in the right place for them. For too long the default setting for people when they are ill and for professionals assessing them has been hospital, and we know that sometimes people arrive at A&E or are admitted to hospital when other options may be more suitable. The **Well Connected** and Urgent Care programmes take a system wide view to the needs of local people and have the commitment from all our organisations which makes us confident that we can improve patient care and reduce strain on the parts of the system which we know are at full capacity."

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For further information please contact:

- Hardeep Cheema, Communications Manager on 07423 534211 or email Hardeep.cheema@worcestershire.nhs.uk